



Governor Bob McDonnell

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Governor McDonnell Announces Restoration of Civil Rights Procedures – New System will be "Fastest and Fairest" in Modern Virginia History –

Decisions Will be Made Within 60 Days of Receipt of All Required Information; Governor Reduces Time for Submitting Application for Non-Violent Felons from Three to Two Years

RICHMOND – Governor Bob McDonnell today announced his Administration's streamlined restoration of rights procedures. Highlighted by a 60-day turnaround period on all completed applications, compared to the previous standard of six months to one year or more, the process will be the fastest and fairest in recent Virginia history. The Governor also announced that he is shortening the time individuals convicted of non-violent felonies must wait before applying for their restoration of their rights; That period will be reduced from the current three years to two years. The Governor's procedures follow his pledge during the 2009 gubernatorial campaign to improve and quicken the restorations process. McDonnell also announced his Administration has already acted upon nearly 200 applications, with decisions now made on all applications submitted with all the required information between the January 16th Inauguration and April 1st. The Administration has also acted upon many of the 650 applications left over from the Kaine administration, which will all be completed by July 15th.

Speaking about the new restoration of rights procedures, Governor McDonnell noted, "I got my start in public service in Virginia as a prosecutor. I strongly believe the foremost obligation of any government is to provide for the security and protection of its citizens. When someone commits a crime they must be justly punished. However, once they have served their time and fully paid for the offenses they have committed, they should be afforded a clear and fair opportunity to resume their lives as productive members of our society. That's why we announced an innovative prisoner re-entry plan last week and why we're significantly improving the restoration of rights process today."

The Governor continued, "A decade ago I worked in the General Assembly to help create a court procedure try to reduce the time it took to process an application for the restoration of rights. There is no reason an individual should have to wait a year or more to get an answer on an application that comes to the Governor's office. This Administration will speed up the process dramatically. We will make decisions within 60 days of receiving a completed application. We will also allow individuals convicted of non-violent felonies to petition for their rights back after just two years, compared to the current three year requirement. And we will create a small, internal working group of key stakeholders to streamline this process and reduce the time it takes to get documents from other agencies. Further, we have now established the fastest and fairest restoration of rights process in modern Virginia history. I believe that when we restore offenders as full participants in our society, it helps them become more productive citizens, and it helps make our Commonwealth a safer and better place."

Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli voiced his support for the Governor's process, stating, "I have long endorsed making it easier for those who have turned their lives around to regain their place in society. My office stands ready to advise the governor on ways to help him achieve his goal of streamlining the process of restoring rights."

Speaker of the House William J. Howell noted, "Protecting people's safety is a foremost responsibility of any government as is ensuring justice for victims of crimes and due process for those who commit them. In Virginia, when someone commits a crime that person is punished appropriately. The new restoration of rights procedures announced today by Governor McDonnell will make that system more fair, timely and efficient. It's but the latest of many ways in which our Governor is working diligently to reform and improve government and I believe these changes are a positive step forward."

King Salim Khalfani, Executive Director Virginia State Conference NAACP commented, "Process is important, but results are even more important. The Virginia State Conference NAACP is encouraged that Governor McDonnell has already made a decision on the majority of completed applications submitted during the first few months of his Administration. We look forward to working with the Governor, Secretary of the Commonwealth and those who desire to have their rights restored in Virginia. The Governor, his staff and stakeholders have put alot of thought and time into producing a new process on the restoration of civil rights. We look forward to working with the Governor on this and other issues to make the Commonwealth of Virginia a better place for all."

Please visit <http://www.Commonwealth.Virginia.Gov/> for more information including the Restoration of Rights packet containing a letter from the Governor, information sheet, and the official application.

The restoration of civil rights restores the right to vote, run for public office, serve on juries, and to serve as a notary public. It does not restore the right to possess or transport any firearm or to carry a concealed weapon. A person seeking restoration of firearm rights must petition the appropriate circuit court pursuant to Va. Code 18.2.-308.2. A restoration of rights does not expunge or remove any charges and/or convictions from a criminal record.

Overview of Restoration of Rights Process

- Creates a 60 day deadline for decisions from the Governor's office on restoration of rights applications, once all required information is received from the applicant, courts and other agencies
- Reduces the time from three to two years that non-violent felons must wait to apply for restoration of rights
- Reduces the time from two years to one year that applicants must wait to reapply if he/she is denied the restoration of rights
- Allows for electronic submission of documents from applicants and from law enforcement organizations to speed up the process
- Establishes an internal working group of representatives from the SOTC's office, the Legislative Black Caucus, a rural and urban representative from the Clerks of Court Association, the DMV, the Attorney General's office, the State Police, the Department of Corrections, civil rights groups, and other affected parties to develop solutions for increasing document

- gathering efficiencies in the process. A report will be required by August 1st
- Allows applicants to list a brief description of civic or community involvement
- Gives 2 Year applicants the option of providing the sentencing order and proof of payment from the appropriate court in order to expedite the process
- As part of the recently announced innovative prisoner reentry initiative of the Administration, all prisoners will be fully briefed on the requirements and encouraged to apply once the requirements have been satisfied

Status of Restoration Applications Before Administration

Out of 650 applications left over from the Kaine administration, approximately 250 were received with all the information needed to make a decision. The Secretary of the Commonwealth's office has started processing those applications and the Governor has set a deadline of July 15 to completely finish the backlog and have decisions communicated to applicants.

- The Office is working directly with the applicants who have submitted applications with incomplete information in an attempt to get a completed application for review.
- All applicants who have a pending application for the restoration of their rights will be sent a letter in the next 5-7 days either alerting them to the decisions about their application or, if a decision has not been made, alerting them the status of their application.

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Video
Photos
Audio
Speeches
RSS Feeds

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Governor's Bio
Meet The First Lady
Governor's Calendar
Scheduling Requests
Executive Mansion

Governor's Policy Office
Government Reform
and Restructuring
Executive Orders
Executive Directives
Staff Listing

Governor's Cabinet

Community Relations
Our Commonwealth
Proclamations
Flag Status
Governor's Fellows Program
Governor's Holiday Hoops Classic
Virginia.gov
General Assembly

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Virginia Tech Panel
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2011 Press Book